

CELL PHONES & DRIVING


NEW LAW IN CALIFORNIA-EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2008

Effective July 1, 2008, California Law will:

- Prohibit the use of "hand-held" cell phones among drivers 18 years and older, except for emergency calls to law enforcement and public safety agencies, and for certain commercial vehicles for which the law's effective date is July 1, 2011.
- Prohibit drivers under the age of 18 years from using any wireless device, even if equipped with a hands-free or mobile service device, except during an emergency.

Violating this law includes a base fine of \$20.00 for a first offense and \$50.00 for each subsequent offense.

While California Law will soon make it illegal for drivers 18 years and older to use a hand-held device while driving, drivers can still use an earpiece, headset, speaker phone, or Bluetooth device. However it is your responsibility as a driver to understand that talking on a cell phone, talking to passengers, eating, changing compact discs/radio stations, or using on-board navigation systems while driving significantly reduces your reaction time, decision making, and ability to control speed, throttle control and position on the road. This increases the risk for serious injury or death. For these reasons, the new California Law also makes it illegal for drivers younger than 18 years of age to use any wireless hand-held or hands-free device, except for emergencies.

Risks While Driving?	What are Your Options?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers must take eyes off the road while driving in order to dial or utilize text messaging. • Drivers take their attention off the road when they are engaged in conversation on cell phones, thus affecting their ability to concentrate on the act of driving (<i>Insurance Information Institute, 2007</i>) • Not only do cell phones create a risk for serious injury or death, but so do other driver distractions. (See Distracted Driving Fact Sheet) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize a hands-free cell phone device while driving (<i>Except for drivers under the age of 18</i>). 2. Never have a stressful conversation while driving. 3. If your mobile phone rings while you are driving, let voicemail answer. Call back when you are in a safe location and no longer driving. 4. If you need to make a call, pull over to a safe location. 5. When driving, it is your responsibility to maintain and operate your vehicle. <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>

Attention Parents & Drivers "Under" The Age of 18

While California Law will soon make it illegal for drivers 18 years and older to use a hand-held device while driving, drivers younger than 18 years of age, will not be allowed to use any hand-held or hands-free device while driving (Except for emergencies). While a cell phone is distracting for both adults and for teen drivers, phone conversation is even more of a distraction for inexperienced young drivers due to the attention required to both drive and talk, and makes it difficult for them to keep their attention on the road.

Attention Employers

If an employee is involved in a motor vehicle accident while making a work-related cell-phone call, both the employee and employer can be liable (*Business and Legal Reports, 2007*). Employers are advised to:

- Check State/local laws, and company/organizational policy to instruct employees in writing regarding cell phone use while operating motor vehicles.
- Instruct employees never to use cell phones while driving (or hands-free).
- If an employee must use a cell phone when driving, it is safest to pull off the road to a safe location to make a call.